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WDVA Holds Information Fair/Open House

The Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs held a Veterans Information Fair on November 6, 2006, at their new headquarters building in Olympia to celebrate Veterans History Awareness Month and Veterans Day.

As part of the event, First Gentleman Mike Gregoire and WDVA director John Lee officially opened the building with a ribbon cutting, as the Washington State Military Department Honor Guard presented the colors.

A number of veterans – unaware they might be eligible – filed claims for benefits after speaking with Veterans Benefits Specialists with the agency.

“Too often, veterans and their families are unaware they might be entitled to benefits,” said Lee. “Our job is to provide them with the information and assistance they need to receive those benefits.”



First Gentleman Mike Gregoire and WDVA Director John Lee cut the ribbon officially opening the new agency headquarters building.

Budget Process – POG

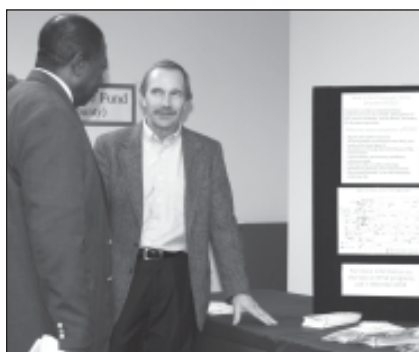
The 2007–2009 biennial budget process has begun! WDVA submitted our budget request to the Governor and Office of Financial Management on September 1. This year, we are asking for additional dollars to support veterans and their families throughout Washington.

In order to make decisions about what items Washington State will invest in over the next two years, Governor Gregoire uses a process known as the Priorities of Government or POG.

Members of the Governor's cabinet and budget experts from the Governor's Office and Office of Financial Management review all budget requests and rank them according to how well they fit into the list of ten statewide priorities.

Deputy Director Alfie Alvarado and Chief Financial Officer Gary Condra are attending POG meetings to ensure WDVA is well represented.

The Governor's final budget will be released on December 20, so stay tuned for updates!



(Left) Mark Fischer, coordinator of the Veterans Conservation Corps program explains available services to an information fair attendee.



(Left) Matt Mueller, Dick Venesky and Sharon Lindley discussed state benefits with local veterans attending the Information Fair.

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Holiday Greetings!

As we approach the end of 2006, we once again look forward to the holiday season.

For many of us, it's a time to reflect upon the last year.

We want to take this opportunity to thank all of you for the wonderful accomplishments over the last year that have brought us together as a team.

We ask you to join us in renewing our commitments and goals for the upcoming year, and embracing new opportunities as partners to remain steadfast in our focus to provide for the more than 670,000 Washington veterans and their families.

Sincerely – John Lee and Alfie Alvarado

Performance Confirmation:

WDVA has become the first Cabinet Level state agency to be 'confirmed' by the Department of Personnel.

This means that we will have the ability to recognize our agency employees (those not represented by labor unions) for exceptional performance that contributes to the overall performance of the agency.

This gives WDVA more tools to recognize employees who are doing outstanding work supporting Washington's veterans and their families.

For more information on WDVA's Performance Management System, please visit http://www.dva.wa.gov/wdva_performance.htm or call Cyndee Baugh at 360-725-2153.

State Veterans Homes:

Each of the three State Veterans Homes is busy preparing for the holidays!

Thanks to our Veterans Service Organization Volunteers and their generous donations of money, talent and time to set up Holiday Gift Shops, residents have been able to send personal gifts to their loved ones!

These annual Holiday Gift Shops are wonderful examples of how our many partners help to make the Veterans Homes a true *Home* for the Holidays!

Veterans Innovations Program:

The Individual Competitive Grant Program is now accepting applications. The Competitive Grant Program goes beyond the initial emergency assistance provided through the Defender's Fund, and focuses on activities that will help veterans and their families obtain sustainable family-wage employment.

Applicants must have served in Operation Noble Eagle; Operation Iraqi Freedom and/or Operation Enduring Freedom or been awarded a Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary or Service Medal.

Individual grants are tailored to meet the needs of the veteran or their family. Below are examples of how a grant could be used:

- Supplement wages for on-the-job training or apprenticeship programs;
- Tuition payments for education or certification programs; and/or
- Supportive services such as transportation assistance, housing, child care, or other needs-related payments necessary to enable an individual to resolve crisis situations, enter training or employment, and/or retain employment.

For an application or for additional information:

- Visit: www.dva.wa.gov;
- Call toll-free (in WA State only): 1-800-562-2308 or (360) 725-2200.

Donations To Veterans Innovations Program:

The first donation to the Veterans Innovations Program was received on November 29, when inmates of the Shelton Correctional Facility presented a check in the amount of \$272!

Several veterans incarcerated at the facility wanted to do something around the holidays to help Washington State Veterans. They organized several donation drives to raise the funds. Thank you!

Individuals or organizations wishing to donate may make tax-deductible contributions to the VIP. More information is available by calling 1-800-562-0132 and pressing '1' or by visiting: http://www.dva.wa.gov/vip_donations.htm

Key Positions Filled

Lynn Hamilton, LICSW, GMHS



Lynn Hamilton came to the Soldier's Home from Evergreen In Home Mental Health Program. She was serving homebound

adults in South King County and providing Mental Health Treatment and Case Management. She has many years experience working within the Community Mental Health system helping individuals remain as independent as possible in their community. She also worked at Northwest Geropsychiatric Unit for a few years with crisis intervention and discharge planning.

Lynn said she is excited about joining the team at the Soldier's Home and hopes her experiences will help deliver excellent care.

Please Welcome Angela Taylor



Angela Taylor was recently hired as a Veterans Benefits Specialist 2 for the Veterans Service Division in Olympia.

Angela will be providing assistance and case management to members of the Washington National Guard and Reservists who served in Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation Nobel Eagle experiencing financial hardships in employment, education, housing and health care. She will case manage a new program called the Defenders Fund.

Angela comes from the Portland Veterans Affairs Medical Center where she worked in the Veterans Reintegration Services office providing support to homeless veterans for 4.5 years in the way of vocational assessment and counseling, training and skills development, education services, and job placement assistance. She also worked for the Clark County YWCA part-time and as a volunteer as a Sexual Assault Advocate and Case Manager.

Angela is a US Army disabled veteran who served overseas in South Korea as an Automated Logistical Specialist.

Staff Changes

Liza Narciso from payroll has filled the vacant Executive Assistant position and now supports Deputy Director Alfie Alvarado.

Jennifer Montgomery from Accounts Payable, joined the HR payroll dept. filling the FA1 position that Liza Narciso left.

New hires Julie Almanzor and Ronald Pitre have filled the vacancies in Accounts Payable.

In Spokane, Gerald Gifford, RN 3 evening shift, accepted the Staff Development/Infection Control position, and will act as the DNS untill Patty Rodriguez arrives in January. Pam Harkins was promoted as the new evening shift RN supervisor.

The Superintendent recruitment process for Spokane and Orting continues with interviews being conducted in December.

Shared Leave

The following individuals are approved to receive shared leave; **Kaddie Marsh, Cheryl Cope, Jeannette Hassan and Denise Williams** at Retsil and **John Fry** at Orting. Contact your HR office if you would like to help.

Talk about Customer Service!

Ingenuity and Teamwork proved successful ingredients in quickly stepping-up and offering help to veterans who were part of the 600 workers laid off when Trans Alta closed coal mining operations earlier this month in Centralia.

Workers were told on Monday at 3:00 pm that operations would cease immediately, and the closure became a daily news item for the region.

WDVA (Barb Logan) started contacting sources in Lewis County to offer assistance to veterans, and then went a step further by contacting Trans Alta human resources.

They provided WDVA with a list of veterans who were part of the lay-off, and WDVA sent all of them a letter about services they might be entitled to.

In addition, WDVA (Eva Campbell, Sandra Myrick and Angela Taylor) participated in a job fair sponsored by Trans Alta less than two weeks after the layoff, where they spoke with about 40 of those veterans, networked with many employers and Lewis County service providers, and tried out a new programmable nametag that works like a reader board.

During their "after-action" briefing to Vet Services Manager Jim Rising, their enthusiasm about the success of the job fair was contagious, and to top it off, they are anticipating around 10 claims they will file on behalf of these veterans!

That's Customer Service

The following letter was sent to the Soldiers Home after an unexpected visit with his 92 year old Grandmother, his only relative. Several staff members were instrumental in organizing his trip.

Good morning all!

I just want to say "THANK YOU"...from the bottom of my heart...for all the kindness and consideration you showed me during my visit. More importantly, I want to "THANK YOU" ladies for being so involved and helpful with my Grandma. I knew that your facility was the right place for her but, it is so reassuring to know that she's in such capable and caring hands.

As you all know, this trip was a very important one for Grandma and me, for several reasons. But, all of your efforts made it a terrific and fulfilling experience.

Finally, I just want to say "THANK YOU" for being such wonderful human beings! Ileen, Shannah, and Kathleen (*Recreational Therapy staff*)...you should all be given Sainthood. You do a difficult and sometimes nearly impossible job. And yet, you all make it look so effortless. God bless you all! And God bless the rest of the crew because they do a terrific job as well!

Have a Happy Holiday Season and hopefully I'll get a chance to see you again soon.

Warm Regards,
Gard Hinojos
Connecticut

Fort Lewis Soldiers Help with Shopping Duty



(Left) A group of active-duty soldiers from Fort Lewis arrived at the Orting Soldiers Home on Tuesday, December 5th to help the residents do some shopping through a special Christmas gift shop set up by the American Legion Auxiliary.

(Right) Other residents didn't care about the shopping, but did enjoy talking, drinking coffee and eating sugar cookies with the active-duty soldiers.



(Left) The American Legion Auxiliary members spend hours gathering the gifts, displaying them for the residents, then wrapping them all and mailing them to family and friends... extraordinary efforts on their part.

Sidewalk Trumpet Player gives to the Soldiers Home



Nathan Noel pictured with the WA Soldiers Home Supt, David DeVore presented the Home with a \$155. check. Nathan, an Orting resident and student at Orting Junior high played his trumpet in front of Safeway to earn money for the residents of the Home. He read an article in the Gazette Orting paper about things the residents of the Home needed and he decided he could help. Indeed he did help, this money will help buy gifts for the residents of the Home.

Helping Fellow Staffers

Orting employees recently held a baked potato sale raising nearly \$500 for the three staff members impacted by the massive floods in the Orting area. Drawing tickets for donated Gift baskets i.e., "Romance Basket", "Bath & Beauty", "Handy Man/Woman" were also sold.

The Spokane Veterans Home also collected donations.

More Moves at Retsil

Residents of the light nursing and domiciliary units at the Washington Veterans Home moved into new rooms during the week of November 13. The moves are part of the agency's plans to vacate and eventually demolish two older buildings (Bldgs 6 & 7) making way for a Veterans Park. Some of the veterans moved into the A and C Wings of the newly constructed nursing care building, while others moved into newly remodeled rooms in Building 10.



Aaron Austin from the USS Abraham Lincoln assisted Dan Cox get setteled into his new room in the A Neighborhood.

The Veterans Home staff shifted into high gear to organize the moves and enlisted the help of over 100 volunteers from local military bases and military hospitals. In addition, facility volunteers and the facility's ombudsmen turned out to help. Each resident was assigned a personal mover who helped pack, move and unpack their belongings.

Thanks to everyone for making this transition a smooth one!

These two Navy Seabees Kevin Smith and Steven Valenzuela did a lot of cleaning in Bldg 10 before residents moved in.



Congratulations Barbara Culley

Associate Superintendent Barbara Culley has accepted a position as a Nursing Home Administrator for a long-term care facility in Seattle.

While it will be very hard to see Barbara leave, we understand her desire to take on the role of Administrator and we applaud her for taking this challenging step. Barbara has been an integral part of Retsil's transformation over the last six years and has contributed greatly to the outstanding care that has become the standard.

Thank you, Barbara, and may you be blessed!

Recognizing Great Service in Spokane

On October 11, 2006 the Spokane Veterans Home held their annual Employee Recognition event. Family and friends gathered as Director John Lee honored Kaye Conrath, Marketing Coordinator and Tracelle Bates, Registered Health Information Technician by presenting them the Director's Award.

Those receiving the Distinguished Services Award were:



Laurie Kaario
CNA



Marv King
VBS



Linda Ramsey
RN



Norma Richards
FSA



Kaye Conrath (center) with her husband, as she accepts the Director's Award from John Lee, Alfie Alvarado and Kathy Magonigle.



Tracelle Bates (center) was also presented the Director's Award from John Lee.

The Safety Award went to Jennifer Becker, and the person who received the most shining star nominations throughout the year was Lisa Hoffman.

“RESOLVE TO BE READY IN 2007”

Homeland Security Urges Americans to Make Preparing for Emergencies Their New Year's Resolution

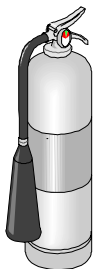
As the world counts down to a new year, nearly half of all adults in this country will make at least one New Year's resolution. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is urging Americans to make a resolution that is both important and easy to keep – to prepare themselves, their families and their businesses for emergencies.

Setting a clear goal to be prepared in 2007 is an easy way for all Americans to be as ready as possible if an emergency occurs. The *Ready* Campaign Web site at www.ready.gov provides individuals, families and businesses with a variety of tools and check lists to help you get started.

Recommended Items to have in the Home:

A SMOKE ALARM. Smoke Alarms should be installed on every level of a home.

A CARBON MONOXIDE ALARM. Carbon Monoxide Alarms should be placed in hallways throughout a home. They should also be placed in recreational vehicles and on boats.



A FIRE EXTINGUISHER. Install A-B-C type Fire Extinguishers in the home and teach all household members how to use them.

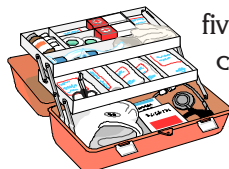
A FIRE ESCAPE LADDER. Homes with more than one floor should have at least one Fire Escape Ladder stored on all floors, other than ground level. These ladders should be stored where they are easily accessible.

A FAMILY DISASTER SUPPLIES KIT. A family will cope best by preparing for a disaster before it strikes. One way to prepare is by assembling a Family Disaster Supplies Kit. Once disaster hits, you won't have time shop and search for supplies.

A PET DISASTER SUPPLIES KIT. Pets enrich the lives of individuals and families in more ways than you can count. In turn they depend on people for their safety and well-being. Having a Pet Disaster Supplies Kit is one of the best ways to care for pets when disaster strikes.



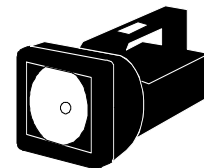
A WEATHER RADIO. As the voice of the National Weather Service, a Weather Radio provides continuous broadcasts of the latest weather information directly from a National Weather Services Forecast Office. During severe weather routine broadcasting is interrupted and special watch and warning messages are issued.



A FIRST AID KIT. Because the first five minutes of a medical emergency are critical every individual and family should have a First Aid Kit in their home and vehicle and on their boat.

Purchase HOUSE NUMBERS. Each home should have its number posted clearly on the front door, over the doorway, or elsewhere on the front so emergency responders can easily locate it. Lives and property can be saved simply by adequate house numbers where emergency workers can find them.

A FLASHLIGHT. As simple as a Flashlight is, it can become a very important tool during and after disaster strikes. Every Family Disaster Supplies Kit should contain a Flashlight and spare batteries.



Create a **EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS** list. Each home should have a list of Emergency Phone Numbers posted near the phone or in the front of a phone book.

Attend **FIRST AID AND CPR TRAINING.** For more than a century the American Red Cross has been saving lives with Health and Safety Services education programs.

By visiting www.ready.gov or calling 1-800-BE-READY, you can learn how to prepare yourselves, your families, homes and businesses for emergencies. Individuals can also get involved in preparing their communities by visiting www.citizencorps.gov and contacting your nearest Citizen Corps Council.

Through these resources individuals can access free materials that will help them make a New Year's resolution that will bring peace of mind.